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ABSTRACT

The importance of maintaining students' interest in art is underscored by the decline in both self-confidence and interest in art that children commonly begin to display during middle childhood. This study explored developmental differences in art motivation, investigating whether the expected decline could be explained by changes in beliefs regarding art similar to changes in beliefs observed in many academic areas. The study also examined whether motivational beliefs are associated with the quality of work children produce and with the behaviors they display in art classrooms, as in other areas. The study's primary theoretical perspective is goal orientation theory, which distinguishes between "performance" or ego goals and "mastery" or task goals. A second and related theoretical perspective is used, Dweck's (1999) entity/incremental theory, which asserts that some individuals believe their abilities in an area are fixed, traitlike entities that cannot improve, while others believe their skills can improve with effort, practice, and instruction. Subjects, 48 kindergarten through fifth grade students from the southeastern United States, participated during their regularly scheduled art class, completing a self-report inventory constructed for the study. The study examines relationships among the students' reports of their (1) performance and mastery goals; (2) view that their art ability can improve; (3) reported use of good art strategies; (4) belief that they are good at art; and (5) belief that art is enjoyable and important. It also examines the relationships between these beliefs and rated quality of art work and behavior during art class. (Contains 3 tables and 17 references.) (BT)

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Children's Motivational Beliefs About Art: Exploring Age Differences and Relation to Drawing Behavior

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Children's Motivational Beliefs About Art: Exploring Age Differences and Relation to Drawing Behavior

Art classrooms present unique motivational challenges. Although young students generally enjoy the hands-on activities that form much of the curriculum and willingly engage in assigned projects, it is often difficult to get students do their best, to add details and improvements to what is frequently a hurried production. Many students continually ask for help, telling the teacher "I can't do this" or "I can't draw," and a significant minority sits disconsolately before a blank paper, waiting for the class to end (Reynard, 1971). Students are frequently overheard discussing who is "good in art" and who (usually themselves) is not. Children typically become more negative about their art ability with age (Flannery & Watson, 1991; Rosenstiel & Gardner, 1977).

The importance of motivation for maintaining students' interest in art is underscored by the common decline in self-confidence and interest in art that children begin to display during middle childhood. This decline is associated with children's perception that their drawings should meet criteria of conventional realism and that they do not have the skills to accomplish this (Flannery & Watson, 1991). However, similar declines in self-evaluations of ability are widely found in many subjects (Stipek & MacIver, 1989), as has the progressive deterioration of students' motivation as they progress through school.

This study was designed to explore developmental differences in art motivation, and to see if the decline we expected to find could be explained by changes in beliefs regarding art that are similar to changes in beliefs observed in many academic areas. We also wanted to know if these motivational beliefs are associated with the quality of work children produce and with the behaviors they display in art classrooms, as they are in other areas.

The primary theoretical perspective of this study is goal orientation theory, which has long distinguished between **performance** or ego goals (achieving in order to impress others, sometimes in a competitive sense) and **mastery** or task goals (focusing on self-improvement and skill development regardless of the performance or responses of others). Students whose academic goals focus on performing to impress others have been found to be less motivated, use less effective strategies, and achieve at lower levels than those who focus on achieving mastery (e.g., Ames, 1992; Pintrich, 2000). This is especially true for less confident students, who view performance situations as potentially exposing their incompetence (and hold performance-avoidance goals) rather than providing opportunities to demonstrate competence (performance-approach goals). The source of the poorer outcome of performance oriented students is thought to be that their concerns about others' responses distract them from giving their full attention and effort to developing and using strategies to master the task at hand. This would be especially problematical for a student who fears failure or embarrassment. For example, a student who is drawing a picture to enter in a contest may be anxious about having her drawing publicly compared with better entries at the same time that she is wishfully imagining the experience of winning. Both imagined scenarios would probably distract her from giving full attention to her drawing.

Implicit in goal theory is the advice that teachers encourage students to pursue personal visions of mastery rather than perform to impress external evaluators. This is a problem for areas such as visual art, in which students must keep in mind the eventual reception of their performance (artistic product) by an audience even as they try to focus on self-improvement and mastery. This issue troubles art teachers who must make daily decisions about the extent

to which they will try to motivate students by stressing grades and the opportunity for display of work. Art teachers are also concerned about whether art contests increase children's focus on competitive performance to the detriment of their task engagement and skill development.

Fortunately, recent research on performance goals suggests that these goals may not be as detrimental as was once feared. Within the past year or two, researchers have found evidence that using one's work to elicit others' approval (performance-approach goals) do not interfere with mastery, but rather provide incentives for good work that can increase effort and interest (Hidi & Harackiewicz, 2000). Students often report pursuing both mastery and performance goals, and depending on personality and situational factors, both kinds of goals can increase interest and achievement, with mastery goals tending to increase interest and performance goals, achievement (Barron & Harackiewicz, 2000). Such mixed findings reflect the present controversy in the field, with practitioners now given conflicting advice about whether or not to encourage performance goals along with mastery goals (Midgley, Kaplan, & Middleton, 2001).

This study also uses a second and related theoretical perspective that is especially relevant to motivation in art. Dweck's (1999) entity/incremental theory asserts that some individuals believe that their abilities in an area are fixed, traitlike, entities, which cannot improve, while others believe that their skills can improve with effort, practice, and instruction. Dweck believes that the fixed view of abilities is the cause of performance goals and diminished effort, because students who believe traits are fixed are likely to focus on demonstrating how much of a trait they have rather than on trying to improve their skills. Even students who believe they have a high degree of talent would be likely to avoid activities, which might expose their limitations. In art classes, students who believe that art ability or talent is a fixed trait would be expected to be so concerned about the quality of their work and the inferences that could be made about their ability if their project did not turn out well that they would be reluctant to try challenging art tasks and unlikely to use good strategies in art.

Both the belief that talent is a fixed trait and the pursuit of performance rather than mastery goals have been found to increase with age, and have been used to explain decreasing academic motivation. Another belief found to be associated with motivation, children's self-concept of ability, also decreases with age (Pintrich & Schunk, 1996). All of these changes are believed to be due to children's cognitive development (e.g., their increased ability to use comparative information) and to features of the school environment, especially the increasing emphasis on competition and external rewards such as grades and test scores. We want to know if there are similar discouraging age trends in art.

The present study examines relationships among student reports of their 1) performance and mastery goals, 2) view that their art ability can improve, 3) reported use of good art strategies, 4) belief that they are good at art, and 5) belief that art is enjoyable and important. It also examines relationships between these beliefs and rated quality of art work and behavior during art class. Briefly, prior research suggests that the most desirable situation would be for students to hold mastery goals, which should be associated with the belief that ability can improve, with the use of good strategies, with the belief that art is enjoyable and important, and with better quality of achievement. The belief that one is good at art and drawing should also be associated with increased motivation to engage in art activities. Therefore, the increased negativity about art seen as children age could be explained if these desirable beliefs decrease with age.

We ask three broad questions:

1) Are there age differences in student-reported motivational beliefs and behaviors that might provide insight into possible motivational reasons for the increased negativity about art commonly seen as children age?
2) Are the motivational beliefs and behaviors children report related to their art outcomes (ratings of drawing quality and teacher ratings of art behavior)?
3) Are relationships among motivational variables in art consistent with those found in other subjects, and can they expand our understanding of motivational processes?

Methods

Study participants were 48 students in Kindergarten through 5th grade (21 African American, 27 European American, 29 girls and 19 boys) in an elementary school in the southeastern US. Students were from six classrooms and participated during their regularly scheduled art class.

Data on children's perception of their motivational beliefs and behaviors were collected using a self-report inventory constructed for this study which asked children about their motivation specific to art class. Using a Likert-type scale, students were asked to rate a series of statements (listed on Table 1) from 1 (low) to 5 (high) based on the extent to which the statements represented their behaviors or beliefs. Data from 17 students reporting beliefs that were contradictory or that otherwise suggested failure to respond thoughtfully to the questions was discarded and has not been included in our description of participants. All such students were in kindergarten through second grade.

The self-report data was examined for student beliefs and perceptions in the following areas: 1) Performance goals (gaining approval from "other people" or from the teacher), and mastery goals (improving skills) 2) Belief that art ability can improve, 3) Reported use of good art strategies, 4) Belief that one is good at art and drawing, and 5) Belief that art is enjoyable and important.

Data on art outcomes was based largely on the drawing of a frisbee students were asked to complete in response to a poem "Adventures of a Frisbee". Students were instructed to show the frisbee's surroundings (in a context of their choice). The drawing was rated for several aspects of quality by the two researchers and the teacher independently, with differences resolved by discussion. The art teacher also rated children's engagement in this drawing task and rated the general art ability and art effort they customarily displayed in her class.

Results

Age differences suggesting motivational reasons for increased negativity about art

Because only one relatively minor gender difference was found on a 3-way (age, race, gender) analysis of variance (boys' drawings were rated as "more original" than girls, $F(7,40) = 6.25$, $p=.02$), a two-way analysis of variance (age by race) forms the basis for findings reported for this study. An alpha level of .05 was used for all statistical tests.

As expected (Table 1), age differences were found on some motivational variables when students were separated into early elementary grades (K-3) and middle childhood grades (4&5). Consistent with research that finds younger children more positive about their

accomplishments and more optimistic about improvement (Harter, 1999; Bjorklund & Green, 1992). Table 1 shows several expected age differences. Younger subjects were significantly higher on reporting themselves being good at art, in reporting the belief that, with effort, anyone can draw well, and in denying that "some people can never do well in art even if they tried." These beliefs would suggest that younger students would be more motivated in art than older students and supports the assertion that older students' increased negativity about art may not reflect an actual decrease in skill (Duncum, 1986; Flannery & Watson 1991).

Contrary to expectations, however, the data did not show that older students were more performance oriented and less mastery oriented in than younger students, and younger children were more likely to report the performance goal of having their teacher look at their drawings. Nor were there the expected age differences in enjoyment of drawing, preference for challenge, reporting careful work, or ratings of quality of drawing and behavior, which would indicate that older children were more negative about art than younger children.

Relation between self-reported motivation and rated quality of drawing and behavior

In order to ascertain the relationship between student responses to the motivation items and ratings of drawing quality and behavior, correlations between the constructs of interest and measures of drawing skill were assessed. In general, we did not find the relationships we expected between motivation items and drawing quality/behavior.

While almost all ratings of drawing quality and behavior were positively correlated, there were only a few significant positive correlations between students' reported beliefs and ratings of drawing quality or behavior (see Table 2). Indeed, many such correlations were negative; mastery goals were negatively correlated with assessments of originality of drawings and with teacher rated art skill, art motivation, and observed engagement in the drawing task. Also surprising were the consistently non-significant or negative relationships between students' reported self concept of art ability and use of strategies and the seven drawing quality/behavior ratings. One would expect that students' opinions of their level of art skill and their use of good strategies would be reflected in their teachers' ratings of their art products and behaviors, but this was not the case.

Our findings suggest that performance for "other people" and for "my teacher" represent two different kinds of goals. The significantly positive relationship between a student's reported performing for "my teacher" and that student's frisbee drawing being rated as meeting the requirements of the assignment, combined with the significantly negative relationship between reporting performing for "my teacher" and the drawing's originality rating leads us to speculate that seeking teacher approval (seen more often in younger students) is associated with general compliance. It appears that doing art to show the teacher indicates dependence rather than a genuine performance goal, and reminds us that who the audience is makes a difference to young artists. For example, students who want the teacher's feedback on their work or who want to bring their work home to their parents sometimes are reluctant to seek a peer's critique of their product. The suggestion that less confident students choose to perform for an audience whose approval is likely is also supported by the finding that students who did not report high self-concept of art ability were significantly more likely to report performing for "my teacher" ($t=2.26$, $p=.03$).

Relationships between motivational self-reports

In order to assess the relationships among the motivational constructs so that we could see if they operate in the area of art as they have been found to in other areas, we computed correlations among the constructs of interest.

As Table 3 shows, there were many significant positive correlations among the self-reported motivational beliefs. Consistent with research in other areas, students are likely to report holding both mastery goals and performance goals. As expected, mastery goals in art were related to using good strategies for art and to the belief that drawing is enjoyable and important. Contrary to expectations and to Dweck's (1999) theory, mastery goals were not significantly correlated with the belief that one can improve art ability if one tries, while, surprisingly, performance goals were correlated with this belief.

An important finding is that the goal of performing for others' approval does not appear to be negative for art (as it sometimes is for other subjects). This is fortunate, because a student's awareness that his or her artwork will eventually be seen (and judged) by an audience might otherwise be debilitating. In this sample, students who reported performance goals were also likely to report positive assessments of their own ability, which would suggest they have performance-approach goals rather than performance-avoidance goals. Performance approach goals have been found to be positive in other areas as well. We do not know if performance-oriented students who are more negative about their abilities might be hampered by performance-avoidance goals.

Not surprisingly, believing that one is skilled in art is related to several other desirable perceptions. We found significantly positive correlations between self-concept of ability perceptions and mastery goals, performance goals for other people and for teacher, belief that one can do well with effort, and belief that drawing is enjoyable and important. This is consistent with research that finds students who expect to attain approval rather than disapproval are more highly motivated (Wigfield & Eccles, 2000), and with most teachers' encouraging their students' belief that they are capable of doing good work in order to support their motivation.

Additional findings: Racial differences in measures

Although it was not a focus of this study, we found that there were differences by race on many of the measures. As Table 1 indicates, African American students were significantly higher than European American students on self-concept of art ability, consistent with studies in other academic areas (Graham, 1994). They were also more likely to endorse mastery goals and performance goals of teacher approval and for "other people". They reported greater "liking to draw", and a greater use of good drawing strategies. However, almost all assessments of drawing quality and motivation were significantly higher for European American students. Because the disproportionately low achievement of African American students is of great concern to educators, evidence that it occurs in art classes (as in other subjects) is troubling. Similar findings were reported for the preliminary analysis of 1997 NAEP art data (Diket, Sobel, & Burton, 2001). In our sample, European American students were notably higher than African American students in socioeconomic status and parental education, and such differences undoubtedly contributed to the differences seen on the NAEP as well. Although one might think

of art as an area of success for children who may be less successful in the traditional academic subjects, these findings remind us that students whose backgrounds have not nurtured the skills and interest in goal-directed self-regulation expected by the culture of most schools will also find achievement in art more elusive.

Discussion

The present study finds that, consistent with findings for other school subjects, students who hold mastery goals in art are more likely to report other positive beliefs and behaviors (e.g., a preference for challenging tasks, high art self-concept, liking to draw, and doing careful and patient work). Differences between younger and older students in several motivational variables could explain the decreased enthusiasm for art frequently observed in middle childhood. However, the lack of positive correlations between self-reported motivational variables and ratings of drawing quality and behavior is puzzling. It may be that self-reports of positive self-assessments and behaviors are related more to personality qualities or cultural conventions than to actual behaviors. The more negative evaluations of the drawings and behaviors of African American students, combined with their more positive self-assessments form a part of this picture, and suggest that we need to find strategies that will help students convert their positive attitudes into the effortful behavior that results in skill development and successful products.

These complex and somewhat confusing findings from this admittedly small sample suggest the need for additional research. One possible avenue is suggested by the cognitive-developmental changes seen in an additional piece of data we collected, students' answers to the prompt: **Think of someone who is really good in art. How did they get to be a good artist?** We found that kindergarteners didn't seem to understand the question, and that only a few first graders gave appropriate responses. However, students from the second grade up gave reasonable responses, and most cited practice as the way the person got to be a good artist. Starting at third grade, some students mentioned learning by watching an artist or learning from art lessons or from their teacher. Fifth graders were the first to mention liking or loving art and using strategies such as trying one's best as a reason for success. This data illustrates the value of using more open self-report or interview measures to elicit descriptions of student perceptions that are richer and perhaps more accurate than those available from questionnaire responses. More direct observation of the behaviors of students would also be useful. Further research is needed to understand sources of motivation for different groups of children in art classrooms and to suggest practices which will foster motivated behavior.

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Table 1 – Items, Ratings, Mean Scores and Significant Differences for Students G

Item	All Students (n= 48)		Studer		
			Younger (n=28)		O (r
Motivation Questionnaire Items	**M**	**SD**	**M**	**SD**	
I like to draw because I want to get better at it.	4.31	.99	4.39	.92	4
I enjoy drawing things that are really hard to draw.	3.27	1.54	3.11	1.57	3
I like to draw because I want my teacher to look at my drawings.	3.14	1.66	3.71	1.51	2
I work hard on my drawings because I want other people to think I'm good in art.	4.27	1.26	4.36	1.19	4
Some kids can never do well in art even if they try hard.	1.91	1.38	1.53	1.14	2
Everyone could draw well if they tried hard.	4.44	1.18	4.75	.84	4
How good are you at art?	4.33	.88	4.71	.46	3
How good are you at drawing?	4.29	.85	4.36	.87	4
How important is it for you to be good at drawing?	3.50	1.38	3.78	1.37	3
How much do you like to draw?	4.66	.72	4.64	.87	4
I work carefully and take my time and go back to add more things to my drawings.	4.33	1.02	4.25	1.14	4
Ratings of Drawing Quality					
Drawing meets assignment in reflecting poem(rated 1-2)	1.56	.50	1.53	.51	1
Drawing is original(rated 1-3)	2.08	.89	2.03	.92	2
Drawing is pleasing(rated 1-3)	1.98	.76	2.07	1.41	1
Drawing includes details (rated 1-3)	2.08	.77	2.14	.85	2
Teacher Ratings of Behavior: (rated 1-3)					
General art skill	2.23	.59	2.14	.65	2
General art motivation	2.25	.64	2.21	.69	2
Engagement in this drawing task	2.25	.74	2.26	.81	2

*F statistics and probabilities are not given if means are not significantly different

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Grouped by Age and Race

Students Grouped by Age				Students Grouped by Race					
Older (n=20)		F (3,44)	p	African – American (n=21)		European-American (n= 27)		F (3,44)	P
M	SD			M	SD	M	SD		
20	1.10		ns*	4.90	.44	3.85	1.06	13.09	.0001
50	1.50		ns	3.29	1.68	3.26	1.46		ns
35	1.56	10.95	.002	4.00	1.64	2.48	1.37	13.75	.0006
15	1.39		ns	4.71	.96	3.92	1.39	4.9	.03
45	1.35	6.18	.02	1.81	1.47	2.00	1.18		ns
00	1.45	5.38	.02	4.71	.90	4.22	1.34		ns
80	1.06	17.11	.002	4.62	.74	4.11	.93	5.35	.02
20	.83		ns	4.43	.87	4.18	.83		ns
10	1.33		ns	3.76	1.55	3.29	1.23		ns
70	.47		ns	4.90	.30	4.48	.89	4.16	.05
45	.82		ns	4.67	.97	4.07	1.0	4.23	.05
60	.50		ns	1.71	.46	1.44	.51		ns
15	.87		ns	1.57	.68	2.48	.85	15.44	.0003
85	.81		ns	1.71	.72	2.18	.74	4.95	.03
0	.65		ns	1.62	.67	2.44	.64	19.19	.0001
			ns						
35	.49		ns	1.86	.47	2.52	.51	2.05	.0001
30	.57		ns	1.95	.59	2.48	.58	9.65	.003
25	.64		ns	1.75	.72	2.62	.49	24.16	.001

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Table 2

Correlations Between Self-Reported Motivation Areas and Measure

	Believes self good at art and drawing	Mastery focus on improving skills	Performance focus on gaining approval of "other people"	Perfor focu gai appr from te
Drawing meets assignment in reflecting poem(rated 1-2)	.208	.280*	.190	.333*
Drawing is original(rated 1-3)	-.204	-.317*	-.189	-.308*
Drawing is pleasing(rated 1-3)	.031	-.104	-.149	.053
Drawing includes details (rated 1-3)	.029	-.147	-.089	-.110
General art skill rating	-.096	-.305*	-.282*	-.099
General art motivation rating	-.150	-.396**	-.455**	-.236
Engagement in this drawing task rating	-.206	-.372**	-.279	-.112

*$p < .05$. **$p < .01$.

s Of Drawing Quality and Behavior For All Subjects (n=48)

mance s on ning roval eacher	Believes one can improve art ability if one tries	Reports using good strategy: taking time, adding details, working carefully	Believes drawing is enjoyable and important
	.097	-.042	.238
	-.122	-.031	-.262
	-.019	-.156	-.097
	.050	-.145	-.027
	-.145	-.165	.110
	-.282*	.099	.158
	-.137	-.197	-.097

Table 3

Correlations Between Self-Reported Motivation Areas for All S

	Believes self good at art and drawing	Mastery focus on improving skills	Performance focus on gaining approval of "other people"	Perfor focu gain appr from te
Believes self good at art and drawing				
Mastery focus on improving skills	.569**			
Performance focus on gaining approval of "other people"	.322*	.523**		
Performance focus on gaining approval from teacher	.349**	.410**	.284*	
Believes one can improve art ability if one tries	.395**	.210	.591**	.286*
Reports using good strategy taking time, adding details, working carefully	.230	.337*	.258	-.080
Believes drawing is enjoyable and important	.528**	.310*	.286*	.293*

*$p < .05$. **$p < .01$.

ubjects (n=48)

mance s on ning roval eacher	Believes one can improve art ability if one tries	Reports using good strategy: taking time, adding details, working carefully	Believes drawing is enjoyable and important
	.016		
	.249	.202	